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Chauncey M. DePew

Address

Before the Annual Convention of the Psi Upsilon Societies of the various
Colleges in the United States, held at Syracuse, May 10th, 1882.

By CHAUNCEY M. DEPEW.

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Before the Annual Convention of the Psi Upsilon Societies of the various
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BY CHAUNCEY M. DEPEW.

GENTLEMEN :

It is a pleasure and privilege to meet with you here to day. I come not as a teacher, but as an elder brother to greet the active workers in Psi Upsilon. I leave for the moment the cares of an arduous profession, the duties of an active business, the engrossing demands of an all surrounding materialism to renew these associations of early manhood. A life has little in it worth living, which cannot frequently return to the memories, the aspirations, the hopes of its beginning. By occasional draughts from these fountains daily duties cease to be the routine of the treadmill, work becomes a recreation, the hardening processes produced by contact and contest with selfishness and viciousness are arrested, and our confidence in human nature, its purity, its development, its possibilities is sustained and enlarged. It is proper that you upon the threshold and I in mid career should reason away our hour for discussion in reviewing the necessity, the uses and the duties of a liberal education.

The Guild of higher education is the most liberal of all orders. Unlike other Unions, there is no limit to

its membership or restriction upon the number of those who shall be trained for admission.

It is a pure Democracy, where honors are only worn by those who win them, and cannot be transmitted or inherited. It has no secrets, but while it explores the whole field of knowledge, its discoveries are for the benefit of all mankind. Its object is to lay broad and deep the foundations, by such mastery of language, science and literature as best prepares the way for the professions, the arts, the humanities and the liberal pursuits of life, trains and develops the intellect, and adds to the strength and manliness of character. It is the duty and destiny of the human race to improve its condition. Through all the trials and tribulations of the ages, it has been true to this destiny. Its history is one of progress and development. For centuries, however, its story is the biography of isolated and eminent individuals. Conquerors and philosophers stand out in startling prominence from the groveling and ignorant masses about them. There was for long periods, no healthy or permanent growth; only as education has been free alike to all has society as a whole improved. Students echo the statement that there is nothing new under the Sun, but all the arts we have were once known and then lost. That is because the secret of them was confined to the few and kept from the masses. Education has been the great leveller and elevator. The mighty revolutions produced by the invention of gunpowder, printing, steam and electrical appliances, the enlargement of liberty and law, the triumphs and beneficent

results of science and mechanism have followed and accelerated the diffusion of liberal culture.

We live in a time when the average intelligence is higher, the purity and perfection of Society greater, and the essential liberties larger than ever before. As the demand for trained workers, and the necessity for thorough preparation increase, so do the difficulties in the way of solid learning. Speed is the virtue and vice of our generation. We demand that morning glories and century plants shall submit to the same conditions and flower with equal frequency. The inventive genius of mankind has provided labor saving machines for every necessity and luxury. By it industries have been stimulated, and the results of labor reduplicated beyond the power of language to state. One man takes the place of a hundred workers, the labor which formerly required a year, is now performed in a day, and time and space are annihilated. State building in earlier times was the process of centuries, now it is the easy outgrowth of a decade. The iron rail is laid through the wilderness, and the next summer the industrious immigrant gathers the harvest, which feeds the World. This vast and incalculable multiplication of power, this grasp and utilization of all the forces of nature, projects and successfully executes enterprises, whose magnitude surpasses the dreams of the Arabian Romancer. The Orient has listlessly listened for ages to the story teller's tales of the wonders worked, by mighty Genii, and the Fairy phantasies created by Shakespeare, have been the delight of the world, but they are both surpassed by

the daily common places of our time. Individuals accumulate fortunes whose income exceeds the revenue of Kingdoms, and every State in the Union can boast of a millionaire whose wealth reduces to comparative poverty the traditional treasures of Croesus and Crassus. There is fever in the blood and fire in the brain. The people are possessed with this fierce energy of industrial and material progress. Cortez, Pizarro and De Soto sought not more recklessly El Dorado, and the Fountain of Youth, than does our population, the sudden accumulation of riches. To the luxuries which wealth could always command, are now added, the control of great enterprises, the concentration of power, the social distinction and adulation, which formerly belonged to lofty lineage, or great achievements in arms, the arts or literature. The contagion of the conflict, the fruits of its victories, affect almost alike the ignoble, the ingenuous, and the ambitious, and the few for its possession, the many for its uses and opportunities, plunge with absorbing anxiety into this struggle for money. The Church, the College, the Forum, the Senate, all feel the pressure and the effects of this consuming passion.

Hence the danger and difficulties which now threaten liberal culture. Amid the din and clash, the rush and roar of industrial activities and speculative excitements, the young man finds it very hard to secure the time, repose, and encouragement necessary to lay that firm and solid foundation, without which a liberal education, and broad and healthful development of the intellectual faculties are alike impossible. No greed is

so unsatisfactory, no economy so wasteful, as that which begrudges or saves the years, necessary for thorough preparation. It is mainly from the ranks of the common people, that the army of liberal education is recruited. From farm and workshop come the men who will dare and suffer in the service of learning, their goal is knowledge, their destiny to wield its power. The successful and opulent desire that their sons shall become also opulent and successful at the earliest possible moment. Precept and example impel only to those studies which can easiest be made practically available. They besiege the doors of the University, the Law School, the Medical College, clamoring for a short road to business. The Colleges recognize the demand and enlarging the boundaries, and loosening the discipline of the curriculum, permit the substitution of elective studies to those who have neither the ability or experience to elect, and grant diplomas for bread and butter equipments. Some not satisfied with this are rushed in a year through Business, or Commercial, or other Specialty Colleges, and boast that while their companions are digging amid the bones and dust of the buried past, they, having purchased a ready made suit of mental clothing, are achieving independence and fortune. Father and son anxious for immediate results, say these precious years when a practice might be secured, or a business established, cannot be spared for dead languages, science, philosophy, and literature, which are not essential in the practical work of the professions, or merchandise, or manufactures. If they select engineering for their vocation, that school is

best which puts them soonest in the field. If they are inclined to literary pursuits, their ambition is not to produce works which will contribute to learning, adorn the library and win solid fame, but by popular and ephemeral processes to sell the millions of trash, and win the fortunes, which shall compensate for forgetfulness and oblivion. If they aspire to the pulpit, they spurn the weary years and tireless labor, by which alone the sources of faith and truth are explored and mastered, and their studies are to so gild the Gospel and cultivate the social graces, as to secure the wealthiest church and largest salary. If law or medicine is to be their avocation, they will learn only so much as will most speedily bring fees and retainers, and leave the battle for the right in society, and government, to reformers and politicians, and the ministering to the poor and suffering, and the defence of the weak and the wronged to philanthropists and fools. This teaching and practice has filled the land with narrow minded, partly informed and bigoted specialists, useless to themselves or the world outside their avocation, and not great within it, and with shallow idiots, who fresh from the tailors' block and hair dressers' chair, gabble about art and beauty and aesthetics and "culchaw."

But while Arkwright with his spinning Jenny enabled one set of fingers to do the work of thousands, Fulton with his steamboat created modern commerce, Howe with his sewing machine indefinitely multiplied the results of labor, Whitney with his cotton gin revolutionized a continent and the Corliss Engine concen-

trated a century in every cycle of the Sun, ~~There~~ There is no royal road to learning; application, work, continuity and enthusiasm are its conditions. It is true, the dead languages are not in daily use in the pulpit, the forum or business, that science, philosophy, history, belle lettres do not of themselves cure souls or patients, win causes or coin money. It is true that modern languages with their exhaustless stores of priceless learning claim equal regard and study. But those better and more safely navigate the stream who know it from source to delta, and whose vision is not bounded by the territory where they ply their trade. The languages not only give grace and accuracy to the expression of thoughts, open the treasure houses of knowledge, furnish the weapons to overcome error and prejudice, but through them Wilkinson wrote the lives of Pharoahs, who had been forgotten before history was born, and Layard, Rawlinson and Rassam have dug from under the Tower of Babel and deciphered the library of Nebuchadnezzar, and by its testimony overthrown the speculations of infidelity, corroborated the Bible and buttressed the faith of Christendom. Science has made plain the secrets of animate and inanimate nature, and philosophy has mapped the mind. Companionship and familiarity with the worthies, the thoughts, the achievements and the discoveries of other times so influence character, so enlarge the intellect, so increase the ability to grasp and sift and find the truth, that one so privileged is promoted in his vocation from a soldier to a Knight, his work is not labor, but love, and while he adorns and honors his specialty, his man-

hood adds to the value and influence of his citizenship. We are the heirs of all the accumulations of the past, but we cannot prove our title and secure our inheritance by the decree of the Surrogate or the award of the Courts of Probate, it comes only through the honest acquisition of a liberal education.

While such a man comes later to his life work, he makes not only a better preacher, lawyer, doctor, editor or man of affairs, but outside his profession he possesses resources for pleasure to himself and influence over others which add immeasurably to the enjoyment of living.

Two races of men planted thousands of years ago, the germs of all the civilization and culture we possess, *the* Egyptians and the Greeks.

With the Egyptians learning was a mystery. It was subdivided into branches and these were the exclusive hereditary property of families. They shared neither with each other or the world, the things they knew. Only those initiated through mystic rites could enter the order, and they only to one degree. The result was, that their art and learning were of the earth, earthy and have perished. Their Pyramids, Obelisks, Columns, Sphinxes, testify to the grandeur and materialism of their culture, but of their sages, philosophers, poets, not even a name survives.

The education of Greece, on the other hand, was free and open to all. Her schools and gymnasiums had doors on every side. All that she knew or discovered was the common property of the world. Emula-

tion stimulated enquiry, and freedom gave birth to genius. Phidiás, and Praxiteles, Demosthenes, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, Pericles and Leonidas are household names to-day. They instruct in the studio, teach in the college, legislate in the senate and fight in the field. Her art, eloquence, philosophy, literature and patriotism have been the inspiration, admiration and despair of succeeding centuries. We have adopted this free system and upon its preservation, development and use, depend the growth of society and the prosperity of the nation. The people have built and endowed universities and libraries. The generous benefactions to Harvard and Yale, Cornell, Johns Hopkins and the Vanderbilt, the Astor and Lenox libraries, with scores of kindred efforts, attest the value placed by those who have and those who have not enjoyed its benefits, upon a liberal education. As the encouragement of the State and the contributions of the liberal, have thus furnished us our opportunity, so do we owe in return, a larger recompense than our personal success. It is to be public spirited, generous in our efforts to aid our fellows in the never ending strife between truth and error, to do the best we can, whatever we undertake to do at all, and as preachers be more than doctrinaries, as teachers more than machines, as lawyers more than advocates, as editors more than partisans, illustrating anew each day that knowledge is power and American men of culture understand its proper use. Thus the men whom scholarship has blest, are true to the high duties of their order, and bless the state and mankind. Far be it from me to

disparage diligence in business, or discourage the accumulation of independence and fortune. That man would be untrue to his mission, his family and his happiness, who failed to do thoroughly his work, and prudently provide for those dependent upon him and for his own old age, but he can neither like a miser, hoard for his selfish gratification, the learning he has acquired or neglect the larger responsibilities imposed, in a free government, upon its educated men.

The great motors of modern progress have come from the Universities. They have not been accidents, but the developments of learning. They have been evolved from the patient processes of the schools and the wealth, comforts, luxuries of mankind are due to the teachings of the colleges. In the laboratory of the university of Glasgow, the application of steam to the arts and mechanics was discovered, by which the world has accomplished more in the last century than during the whole period since the birth of Christ. By thoughtful and intelligent experiments at Princeton, electricity was utilized and under man's control the lightning belts the Globe, furnishes an illuminating medium which rivals the Sun, and suggests the possibility of a new force moving the industries, incalculably accelerating productiveness and power. The study of astronomy and its revelations have created the science of navigation and made upon the trackless ocean beaten highways for commerce. From science and mathematics have come the principles underlying and suggesting all the marvellous inventions which are the pride and glory

of our age. While by chemistry the elements have been wrung from Nature, to enable the physician to cure diseases, mitigate suffering and prolong the span of human life.

The Universities in all ages have been the nurseries and citadels of liberty. When Church and State conspired together to crush the last vestiges of civil and religious freedom, when independence died upon the scaffold and the block, thought was incarcerated in dungeons, and conscience was burned at the stake, and tortured on the rack, and Abelard brilliant and beautiful, groping in the dark for truth, fled to the wilderness, fifteen thousand students gathered about him, and for their own government organized a pure democracy. At Oxford, Paris, Berlin, Prague, wherever a University existed, there student Republics built upon Abelard's model, trained and graduated the Apostles of Liberty. It was the students who precipitated the revolution of 1848, which altered the map and liberalized every government in Europe. With a million of soldiers and a million of policemen to uphold despotism, and suppress liberty in Russia, the spirit of her colleges keeps the Czar a prisoner in his own palace. From their professors' chairs at Wurtemberg and Prague, Luther and Huss started the reformation, to which we chiefly owe our modern civilization. Knox went from the University at Aberdeen to thunder in the presence of Mary Queen of Scots, those terrible truths which made Scotland the home and centre of culture and religious enquiry, and that sweet and mighty Oxford professor John Wyckliffe

in giving to the people the English Bible, started a movement which ended in the Declaration of our Independence, and the formation of the American Republic.

The Knights of the order to which these men belonged cannot be idle. The repose of learning is delightful, quiet companionship and enjoyment of favorite authors and the solitude of congenial study full of refined and quiet pleasure. But such is not their mission. Religious revulsions, social revolutions, popular elections, the making of laws, the direction of those forces in free communities and States, which are constantly working for good or evil, demand attention and direction. Man is ever struggling for real or imaginary emancipation. His enemy exists or he creates it. It may be against genuine injustice that he rebels, or ignorant and misled, against those conditions and restraints absolutely essential to safety and order. In his effort to throw off the tyranny of forms, he would uproot all faiths. In his protest against inequalities of fortune and position, he wages an indiscriminate warfare against capital, careless or forgetful of the fact that powerful combinations and vast resources are necessary in conducting the great enterprises which in our time develop national wealth and promote individual prosperity and happiness. Educated intelligence keeps radicalism within proper limits, and forces it to conserve the highest purposes, by harnessing it to the car of progress. The masses have been so educated and society as a whole so elevated, that the destinies of mankind can no longer be changed

or controlled by Cromwells or Napoleons. Atheism assails the Church, communism order, socialism society, financial heresies credit, State rights the Republic, and they can only be met and overcome by the resistless logic of superior knowledge. The Oneida community reforms, Mormonism topples towards its downfall. Greenbackism is dissipated by the resistless force of educated public opinion and enlightened conscience. The captains, the teachers, the leaders in every community who produce these results are and must be the men who have received a liberal education, and are inspired by public spirit. The stability and beneficence of our Government is due to the fact, that neither standing armies, or State Churches, or illiberal laws, or hereditary orders of nobility, repress and restrain, but the scholars of the land, engaged in its practical pursuits, upon the rostrum, from the pulpit, through the press, in the discussions at the corners, controvert or hold in or direct dangerous principles or elements.

The liberally educated young men in our Country should be politicians, but it is almost impossible for them to be office holders. Office, unless they have first secured at least a moderate competence, endangers their independence, retards their success, and may spoil their careers. Public life has been in all free States the highest and noblest of ambitions. To guide the Republic, command listening senates, and promote the national welfare fill the full measure of duty and fame. But the same causes which threaten solid learning have changed the representative opportunities. The energy of business,

its absorption of all classes, its demand for uninterrupted time and attention, and the increase of the cost of living have nowhere produced such marked effects as upon our statesmanship. The legitimate expenses of an election almost equal the salary of the representative, and the exacting duties of the place prevent his successful management of either a professional or mercantile vocation. The rapidly increasing labor of properly administering the government of this vast and growing Republic adds daily to the difficulties of the situation. Men of affairs instead of applauding the public spirit of one of their number who enters the public service, regard him with distrust, and withdraw their confidence and credit. Hence the halls of Congress are gradually filling up with wealthy men and professional place men. The glorious school in which preceding generations were trained for grand careers, is almost disbanded. Convictions yield to expediency, and the ability to guide, and the courage to resist are leaving their accustomed seats. By combinations and cunning, mediocrity occupies positions it cannot fill, and the machine runs for the suppression of dangerous ability and the division of all the dividends of honor and power among its directors. The leaders are dependent upon followers who have no livelihood, but office, and who desert the setting, and worship the rising Sun, with a facility which surpasses the middle age courtier, who cried, the King is dead, long live the King. The necessity of manipulation for re-election, of re-election for a vocation gives no opportunity to master those great questions upon whose

wise solution depend the destiny of the commonwealth, and the representative devoured by a consuming anxiety about his fortunes, and having failed to study the needs and principles of government, is blown about by every shifting current of the popular breath. When he falls, because he has builded upon the sand, if he has passed the period when adaptation is possible to new pursuits, he closes his career as a doorkeeper, a claim agent or a department clerk. There is not at this hour in public life a single recognized, and undisputed leader of a great party, or the progenitor of accepted ideas. The Congressional Record is a morass of crudity and words, whose boundless area and fathomless depths, none have the courage to explore. The Washingtons, Adamases, and Jays of the first period, the Hamiltons, Jeffersons, and Madisons of the second, the Websters, Clays, and Calhouns of the third, and the Seward, Sumners, Chases, and Lincolns of the fourth, have no successors of equal power and influence. The debates of to-day are unread, but the utterances of these statesmen were the oracles of millions. Has the talent which made these men eminent died out? Oh, no. It is practicing law, editing newspapers, managing manufactories, mines, and commerce, building railroads, and directing transportation.

If then those who fill the leader's place cannot lead, so much greater the responsibility and duty which rests upon the liberally educated to so watch and ward, so understand and teach, so discuss and act, that an intelligent and vigilant public opinion shall hold in its grasp

and direct for its purposes Presidents, Cabinets and Congresses. Never fear, but if they are true to their mission, whenever one of those mighty crises come which threaten the stability of our institutions and demand the services of the loftiest patriotism and genius, that from the ranks will spring other Websters and Clays to the Council, other Sewards, Chases and Stantons to the Cabinet, other Lincolns to the Presidency and other Grants, Shermans, Sheridans and Thomases to the field.

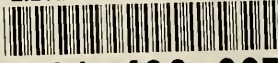
The privilege of freely criticising is granted only to those who can greatly boast. We need have no regrets for the past, or anxiety for its return. No time is so good as the present, no period, no country so rich in liberty and opportunity as ours. Races have lived and died, nations have flourished and perished, heroes, martyrs and sages have left priceless legacies and we are their heirs and the beneficiaries of all the experience, the examples and the accumulations of the past. The most radical, we are also the most conservative of States. We can canonize William Lloyd Garrison as a Reformer, and dismiss Dennis Kearney as a Demagogue. Extremes finding unexpected safety valves in a freedom of speech, which amounts to license, and seeking walls to tear down, beat against the empty air, while Conservatism, in our written Constitutions, our adoption of the common law, our reverence for the Fathers, our Independent Judiciary, finds rights protected and wrongs redressed. Genius, which was misunderstood, or ignored, or persecuted, or put to death in its own times; receives the

recognition and applause of ours. Plato was sold into slavery and Socrates compelled to drink the Hemlock. Cicero plead to bought juries, Sidney and Russell, though heroes with us, were Martyrs in their own age. Galileo was forced to deny his philosophy and Bacon's contemporaries said his works were like the "Peace of God, which passeth all understanding." The wits and worthies of the time of Queen Elizabeth and Queen Anne are more thoroughly appreciated and largely read by this generation, than by all which have preceded. While even the earlier part of this century doubted and opposed the railroad, tried to prevent the introduction of gas, and sneered at and fought the telegraph, this decade welcomes and encourages all invention and discovery, art and letters. Twenty years ago ~~Emm~~erson, the transcendentalist, and Darwin, the evolutionist, were alike the objects of almost universal sneers and scoffs, and now the World, assigning to each the highest place in his sphere, stands by reverently with bared head, while the one is buried beneath the Concord elms, and the other is laid away in Westminster Abbey, among England's mighty dead.

A recent tragedy which shocked and stilled the world, brought before his countrymen a glorious example of the scholar in public life. While performing with rigid exactness all the duties of his calling, he never neglected the claims the community had upon his citizenship and culture. He found time every day for his allotted lines from the classics, and pages in some book of solid worth. When he enlisted in the Army,

he mastered the curriculum of West Point in three months, and won Kentucky by crossing a swollen river, when the engineers could suggest no remedy, upon a bridge constructed from recollections of Cæsar's Commentaries. He learned the French language to get readier access to the great works upon finance, when his Congressional duties demanded a solution of that vital question; and reasoning from original principles, founded in his college life, impressed upon the Supreme Court of the United States a new bulwark of liberty. The broad foundation he laid at Williams, his loyalty ever after to learning, and the uses and duties of knowledge, developed the backwoods boy into the learned scholar, the good teacher, the successful soldier, the accomplished lawyer, the eloquent orator, the equipped statesman, and the lamented President James A. Garfield.

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